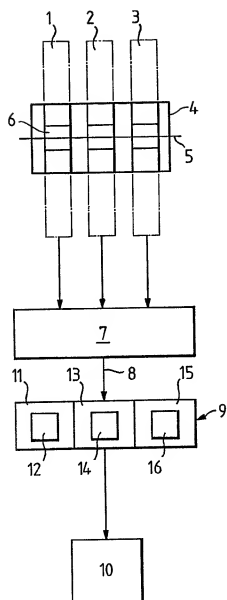


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(71) Applicants  
Ace Coin Equipment  
Limited,  
(Great Britain),  
Ace House,  
Lanelay Road,  
Talbot Green,  
Mid Glamorgan,  
South Wales.  
(72) Inventors  
William Keith Arnold,  
Michael Francis Henry  
Earle,  
Richard Thomas Cox,  
David Roderick Lloyd,  
Kyle Fields.  
(74) Agent and/or Address for  
Service  
Forrester Kettle and Co.,  
Forrester House,  
52 Bounds Green Road,  
London N11 2EY.

**(54) Fruit machine with part-gamble feature**

(57) A fruit machine is operable by the player to enable part of a prize awarded for a winning game to be gambled with a view to increasing the value of the prize. Actuation of the part-gamble control button causes a predetermined proportion of the value of the initial prize to be paid out and the remainder to be gambled automatically and repeatedly in such a way that any prize resulting from each automatic gamble is paid out and the remainder forms the stake for the next automatic gamble.

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## SPECIFICATION

**Amusement with prizes machine with part-gamble feature**

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This invention relates to improvements in or relating to amusement-with-prizes machines, such as fruit machines.

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A fruit machine has a plurality of rotatable reels each having a selection of symbols distributed around its periphery. The reels are rotated during the game and, at the end of a game, the combination of symbols displayed by predetermined portions of the reel peripheries in an evaluation area (defined for example by a window of the machine) determines, according to predetermined rules, whether or not the player has won a cash prize and, if so, the value of the prize.

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Although traditionally fruit machines have had mechanical reels, optical and video fruit machines have been proposed in which simulated reels or reel substitutes are optically projected onto a screen or displayed on a cathode ray tube. In the present description and claims, the term "reel" is intended to embrace such simulated reels and reel substitutes.

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It is an object of the present invention to provide an amusement-with-prizes machine providing a novel gambling feature.

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Accordingly, the invention provides an amusement-with-prizes machine including a part-gamble control operable by the player to enable a prize awarded for a winning game to be gambled with a view to increasing the value of the prize, in which machine actuation of the part-gamble control causes a predetermined proportion of the value of the initial prize to be paid out and the remainder to be gambled automatically and repeatedly in such a way that any prize resulting from each automatic gamble is paid out and the remainder forms the stake for the next automatic gamble.

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Preferably, the predetermined portion of any prize resulting from each automatic gamble that is paid out is the same as the predetermined proportion of the initial prize which is gambled. Suitably, the predetermined proportion in each case is one half of the value of the prize. The winning odds for each automatic gamble may be the same throughout the sequence of gambles, or may vary as the number of succeeding automatic gambles increases. Conveniently, the increased prize won for a successful automatic gamble may be twice the stake gambled.

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It is envisaged that an amusement with prizes machine according to the invention may also incorporate a full gamble feature whereby a player may gamble the whole of the initial prize in a series of individual gambles. A collect button may also be provided to enable the player to opt to collect his initial prize or an intermediate prize if the full gamble feature is played.

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Desirably, the part-gamble control constitutes an intermittent feature of the machine which is operative only on games selected, for example, at random. The machine may be provided with a warning device such as a flashing light, to indicate that the part-gamble feature is available.

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In order that the invention may be readily understood, an embodiment thereof will now be described, by way of example, with reference to the accompanying drawing, the single Figure of which schematically illustrates the relevant parts of a fruit machine embodying the invention.

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Referring to the drawing, a simple fruit machine embodying the invention comprises three rotatable reels 1 to 3, each having a selection of symbols

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distributed around its periphery. After rotation of the reels to play a game, the reels stop and three symbols on each of the stopped reels are visible in an evaluation area defined by a window 4 provided with a payline indicator 5. The central symbols 6 displayed on the reels beneath the payline 5 constitute a payline row of symbols.

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An electrical win evaluator 7 receives signals indicative of the stopped positions of the reels and so as to determine whether the combination of

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symbols displayed on the payline constitute a winning combination. If a winning combination is present, the win evaluator delivers on output line 8 an electrical signal indicating the value of the initial prize which has been won.

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The signal passes via a payout control unit 9 to a payout device 10 for paying out cash prizes to the player.

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The control unit 9 comprises a collect device 11 having a collect button 12, a full gamble device 13 having a control button 14 and a half-gamble device 15 having a control button 16.

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The gamble and half-gamble devices are intermittently operable and are selected on a random basis, either the full gamble or the half-gamble being provided for a feature game. If neither feature is operative, then any prize indicated by the win evaluator 7 is notified to the payout device 10 directly via the collect device 11 and payout is effected automatically without intervention of the collect button 12. If either the full gamble or half-gamble features are available, then the initial prize may only be collected by actuating the collect button 12 to pass the instruction from the win evaluator 7 to the payout device 10.

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When operative, the full gamble device 13 enables a player to gamble the total value of his initial win in a plurality of separate gambles and the player has the option after each such gamble to collect any increased prize he has won or to gamble again up to the maximum number of gambles allowed by this feature.

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When the half-gamble feature 15 is available, the player initially has the option of deciding whether to gamble or collect. If he decides to collect, then the full value of the initial prize is paid out to him and no

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gamble takes place. If he opts to play the half-gamble feature by pressing the half-gamble control button 16, then the payout device is initially instructed to payout half the value of the initial prize,

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the remaining half forming the stake for a series of automatic gambles over which the player has no control. Each automatic gamble provides for a doubling of the stake if the gamble is won, half of the resulting win then being paid to the player automatically and the remaining half of the value being used

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as the stake for the next gamble. The automatic sequence of gambles continues until a losing gamble is encountered.

- By way of example of the half-gamble feature, assume an initial prize of 40p with the option to play the half-gamble feature. If the player decides to collect the initial prize, then he presses the collect button 12 and is paid out with the 40p prize. If the player opts to play the half-gamble feature by pressing the control button 16, then he initially receives a payout of 20p, the remaining 20p being gambled in a first automatic gamble. If this first automatic gamble is won, the value of the prize is increased to 40p. The player is then paid out a further 20p and the remaining 20p forms the stake for a second automatic gamble. If the second gamble is also successful, then the prize money is again increased to 40p, with 20p being paid out to the player and the remaining 20p being invested in a further automatic gamble. The chain of automatic gambles continues until a losing gamble is encountered.

- Whilst, for simplicity, a simple form of the proposed part-gamble feature has been described, it will be appreciated that the portion of the initial prize which is gambled may be selected as desired, the proportion gamble may differ from automatic gamble to automatic gamble and may be different from the gambled proportion of the initial prize, and the winning odds for the successive automatic gambles may be different instead of the same.

- For the sake of simplicity, the invention has been described as applied to a simple mechanical fruit machine having three reels. However, it will be appreciated that the invention is equally applicable to machines having other numbers of reels and indeed to other forms of amusement with prizes machines.

- Moreover, although the win evaluator and control unit have been illustrated as separate devices in the drawing for the sake of explanation, it will be appreciated that the functions of these devices may be carried out by a suitably programmed micro-computer.

#### CLAIMS

1. An amusement-with-prizes machine including a part-gamble control operable by the player to enable a prize awarded for a winning game to be gambled with a view to increasing the value of the prize, in which machine actuation of the part-gamble control causes a predetermined proportion of the value of the initial prize to be paid out and the remainder to be gambled automatically and repeatedly in such a way that any prize resulting from each automatic gamble is paid out and the remainder forms the stake for the next automatic gamble.
2. A machine according to claim 1, wherein the predetermined proportion of any prize resulting from each automatic gamble that is paid out is the same as the predetermined proportion of the initial prize which is gambled.
3. A machine according to claim 2, wherein the predetermined proportion in each case is one half of

the value of the prize.

4. A machine according to any one of claims 1 to 3, wherein the winning odds for each automatic gamble are the same throughout the sequence of gambles.

5. A machine according to any one of claims 1 to 3, wherein the winning odds for an automatic gamble vary as the number of succeeding automatic gambles increases.

6. A machine according to claim 4, wherein the increased prize won for a successful automatic gamble may be twice the stake gambled.

7. A machine according to any preceding claim, also including a full gamble feature whereby a player may gamble the whole of the initial prize in a series of individual gambles.

8. A machine according to claim 7, wherein a collect button is provided to enable the player to opt to collect his initial prize or an intermediate prize if the full gamble feature is played.

9. A machine according to any preceding claim, wherein the part-gamble control constitutes an intermittent feature of the machine which is operative only on games selected, for example, at random.

10. A machine according to claim 9, including a warning device, such as a flashing light, to indicate that the part-gamble feature is available.

11. An amusement-with-prizes machine substantially as hereinbefore described with reference to the accompanying drawing.

12. Any novel feature or combination of features herein described.

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